



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

FEBRUARY 2015

EMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT
GARY APPLGATE

USING LIDAR FOR
CULTURAL RESOURCE CHECKS

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



Strip-till, Monona County

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a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Jay Mar,
State Conservationist

"The Gospel According to Bennett"

This issue I want to share a few excerpts from the book "For Love of the Land...A History of the National Association of Conservation Districts," written by R. Neil Sampson.

"Hugh Bennett expressed his deep feelings about productive land and its value to mankind many times, and built the Soil Conservation Service in accordance with these strong beliefs and ideas - land is a complex resource within a complex environment and soil is but one part of land. To protect and improve the land for permanent, productive use, it must be considered in terms of all its parts: soil, slope, climate, and susceptibility to depreciation by erosion, over cropping, or other processes of deterioration. There is no easy way to soil and water conservation, no panacea such as terracing or any other single practice indiscriminately applied. Land varies from field to field and can be classified as to its capability."

"It was Bennett's idea that neither the engineers, the agronomist, the foresters, nor any of the other technical specialists had all the answers. Working together, however, they could diagnose and prescribe, much as medical team."

"Bennett also created a new kind of professional...the soil conservationist...a man trained to bring to focus on individual farms and ranches and in small watersheds the combined skills of all the physical and biological sciences. Backing up the new breed of technician were small groups of specialists in engineering, wildlife management, soils, the plant sciences, economics and others as needed for training, advice and consultation on special problems...The heart of the soil and water conservation job in conservation districts was the conservation plan, a guide to land use and conservation treatment. Tailored to each farm or land unit, it is developed by the farmer and a professional conservationist working together."

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

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CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



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RCPP: IOWA PROJECTS SELECTED FOR NEW, INNOVATIVE PROGRAM



Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Special Programs Marty Adkins (right) shakes hands with Cedar Rapids Mayor Ron Corbett at an event celebrating the RCPP project Jan. 15.

Iowa will receive about \$4.6 million as part of the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which focuses on public-private partnerships.

The Iowa Targeted Demonstration Watersheds Partnership Project will receive \$3.5 million. With the funding, IDALS-DSC and its 20 project partners will increase available resources through existing demonstration projects in key watersheds, conduct farmer-to-farmer outreach and assist farmers in implementing conservation practices.

Through RCPP, the City of Cedar Rapids will receive \$2.1 million to fund the Middle Cedar Partnership Project, which focuses on working with local conservation partners, farmers and landowners to install best management practices such as cover crops, nutrient management, wetlands and saturated buffers. The focus will be on improving water quality, water quantity and soil health.

MELODY BRO: NEW WOMEN, LAND AND LEGACY COORDINATOR



Melody Bro joins the staff at Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) to increase outreach to women in rural Iowa. She will coordinate the Women, Land and Legacy program, where local groups of women hold ongoing

meetings covering topics from farm management to conservation.

Bro has seen the effects of the program in Tama County, where she lives. "It amazes me how passionate women are about the land and how eager they are to learn more," Bro says.

This is the first time that the Women, Land and Legacy program will have dedicated staff. The program's successes are due to the efforts of the Women, Land and Legacy State Team, which

includes women from many state and federal agencies.

"Melody has done a tremendous job of facilitating Women, Land and Legacy efforts in Tama County for eight years and has assisted the local team in creating an extremely successful effort there," says Tanya Meyer with the Washington County Natural Resources Conservation Service, and a member of the State Team.

Women, Land and Legacy, which held its first locally-based meeting in 2004, is currently active in 22 Iowa counties. For more information go to www.womenlandandlegacy.org.

This position is made possible through support from Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

BACK IN THE DAY

1973



The first "Back In The Day" photo was taken by former Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Specialist Lynn Betts in 1973 at the Robert Jacot farm near St. Ansgar in Mitchell County.

It shows old-fashioned hog production on Jacot's nearly level ground. Kenyon and Floyd soils on the Jacot farm in Mitchell County produced an abundant corn crop, which was primarily fed to livestock.

The aerial image taken at right highlights contour farming in 1938. Kenneth Kerr in Postville used his Soil Conservation Service Conservation Plan, in cooperation with Extension Service, to lay out his 174-acre farmland.

1938



1967



This 1967 photo taken by Walter Weiss shows farmer Merlynn Bintz of Minden in Pottawattamie County preparing to seed native grasses on 20 acres of hilly land being converted from cropland to pasture.

If you have a "Back in the Day" picture you would like to contribute, please mail it to Jason Johnson or Laura Crowell in the state office, or scan and e-mail a high resolution version to laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

**EMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT**

**Gary
Applegate**

Title: District Conservationist
(Wayne/Lucas Management Unit)

College Education:

- » B.S. in Agronomy, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1982
- » M.S. in Animal Science, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1986

Younger Years: Gary grew up in southern Knox County, Missouri (between Kirksville and Hannibal) on a combination grain and livestock farm. Gary was always interested in farming and raising livestock. As an avid hunter and fisherman, he has always had a passion for conservation and a desire to be a good steward of all the resources that nature has given us.

Conservation Career: Gary worked briefly as a feed salesman before going back to graduate school. After completing grad school, he worked for the University of Wisconsin Extension for 5 years and the University of Missouri Extension for 19 years as an Extension Livestock Specialist in South Central Missouri.

He began his NRCS career in 2010, serving as a Resource Conservationist covering all of Eastern Wyoming. There, he worked primarily with large cattle feeding operations and ranches writing CNMP's and helping the ranchers through the EPA and DNR permitting process.

In 2012, Gary's father became seriously ill with renal cell cancer and he moved back to Grundy County, Iowa, to be closer to family during this difficult time. He served as a multi-county Resource Conservationist serving Grundy, Hardin, Marshall and Story Counties in Area 2.

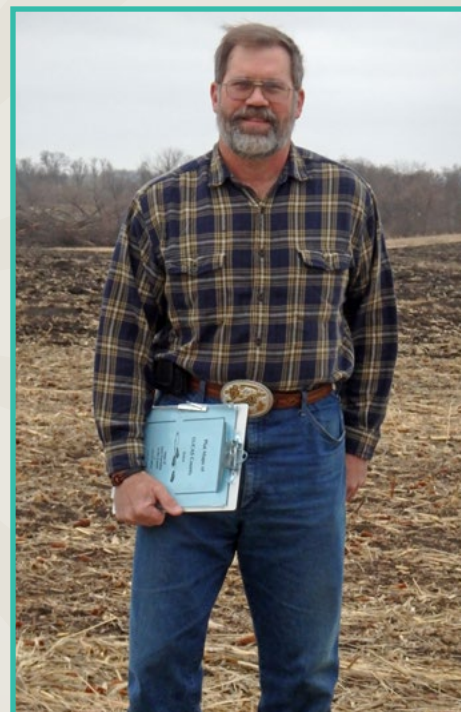
In January 2015, Gary began his new job as District Conservationist serving the Wayne/Lucas County management unit.

NRCS Goals: Gary's favorite thing about working for NRCS is the fulfillment he feels knowing he is helping both the local agricultural producers and at the same time helping to improve and sustain the natural resources for future generations.

While in Wayne and Lucas County he wants to build strong relationships with local producers to help them preserve the soil and water resources in the area. He hopes to be a positive influence on fellow employees, helping them to achieve their aspirations.

In His Free Time: Gary is – to quote an old phrase – “a jack of all trades and master of none.” He enjoys horseback riding and wood-working (particularly refurbishing old buggies, wagons and sleighs). He also loves to hunt and fish.

Family: Gary and his wife, Lisa, have three children. Ben, age 26, is a car salesman in Jefferson City, MO; Rebekah, 24, is a Registered Nurse in Columbia, MO; and Dylan, 19, is an Army reservist in Steamboat Rock, IA.



Gary Applegate

[SPOTLIGHT VIDEO]

Profile in Soil Health: Grinnell Heritage Farm



Some people are born to farm. Others grow to love it. In Melissa Dunham's case, she fell in love with a farmer—and now she loves both the farmer and the farm. She and her husband Andy Dunham own and operate Grinnell Heritage Farm. The certified organic farm has grown from three acres in 2007, to 22 acres today, and produces more than 60 varieties of plants and vegetables. "We grow everything from asparagus to zucchini," she says.

Take some time to learn more about the Dunham's organic farm by clicking on their picture.



FEGLI MYTHBUSTERS!

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) put together three Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program mythbusting videos for employees. These videos can be found on YouTube. We've linked them below:

Will I lose my Federal life insurance coverage when I retire?

» <http://youtu.be/vKlcZXv2P3w>

Can I make changes to my Federal life insurance once I retire?

» <http://youtu.be/XL5WicWpKjg>

When I turn 65, will I automatically lose my Federal life insurance coverage?

» <http://youtu.be/FUHPohFQHWI>



HR
CORNER

By Richard Rogers, Archeologist



Richard Rogers

Iowa is one of the few states to have complete LIDAR coverage. Each field office has access to this data base by internet and through ArcMap. It is a powerful tool for locating certain types of cultural resources.

This includes Indian burial mounds that often show up clearly in LIDAR hillshade images. Knowingly disturbing burial mounds violates the legal code of Iowa. Disturbing human remains at burial sites has caused rioting and physical violence in Iowa.

The identification of burial mounds needs to be as efficient and effective as possible for the field office. LIDAR can help field offices do this. A few minutes taken to scan a LIDAR hillshade image can often be a much more efficient use of time than hours spent in the field to identify burial mounds.

Sometimes, LIDAR hillshade cannot only be more efficient than field observation, it can also be more effective. For example, Soil Scientist James Gertsma discovered that one mound field was being buried by over-washing sediment and was difficult to identify in the field because only the tips of the mounds were sticking up above the sediment. However, these mounds were easily identified by the use of LIDAR hillshade.

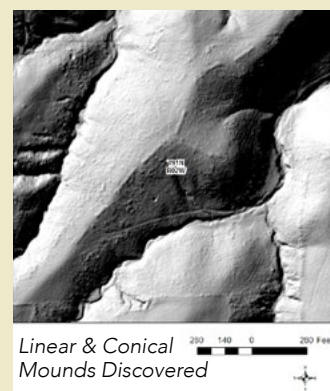
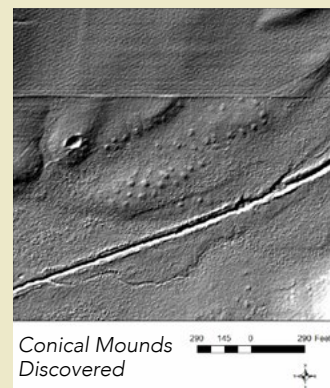
The Lyon County field office has identified hundreds of previously undiscovered burial mounds and an intact Indian village in their county. They assembled a binder containing these LIDAR images to help avoid damaging these resources in future

work. The state office is working on a project to develop a manual to aid field offices in using LIDAR to identify cultural resources.

LIDAR – like other cultural resource tools – needs to be used early in the 9-step planning process. It should be used in step 3 where you inventory resources, and it needs to be finished by the completion of step 7 when a decision is made.

LIDAR is very useful for cultural resources, but it does have limits. Dense vegetation can often conceal cultural resources. Clumps of dense vegetation can look like burial mounds. It only works for cultural resources that are topographic features.

Mounds can occur from various causes that have nothing to do with ancient Indians reshaping the landscape. False features may appear in the LIDAR image due to missing data or sensor noise. The image represents features present from 2007 to 2010 that may no longer be there. Because of these and other reasons, all cultural resources observations on LIDAR need a field check for verification.



By James Cronin, State Biologist



Iowa NRCS State Biologist
James Cronin

As 2015 opens, I am reminded of what our role is with regard to natural resources conservation: "...to provide ecosystem-based assistance to all our customers to help them improve ecosystem health, restore damaged ecosystems, and sustain natural resources."

(130-GM, Part 406.10(a)).

Indeed, this is a tall order, and as the State Biologist, I often feel overwhelmed with the question of how to best approach the integration of wildlife into our conservation planning activities. What became clear to me in 2014 is that I must know something about what is meant by the term "wildlife," why wildlife is important, and how to integrate the concept of wildlife into natural resource conservation/land-use plans that a landowner is willing to accept and implement?

Perhaps it's best to kick off 2015 by looking at where we've come from to better orient ourselves for the coming year, and what better person to start with than Chief, Hugh H. Bennett. On February 9, 1938, Chief Bennett presented the following speech to the fledgling Wildlife Section of Soil Conservation Service.

As I read his speech, I was struck by a number of relevant factors for us to contemplate this year, and which I hope we will do more to apply in 2015:

1. As we better understand the practice, we become stronger advocates for conservation;
2. Wildlife conservation was a fundamental component to the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service program (SCS);
3. Early SCS land-use planning philosophy was holistic and considered two basic interests: the farm (individual), and the Nation (collective);
4. Wildlife on the farm has non-economic value, too;
5. Soil conservation and health is intricately tied to vegetation and wildlife, as they form the basic components of the ecological web; hence, the importance of "biologic balance" on and off the farm;
6. Game species are clearly important and the States and cooperators are well suited to manage such species. NRCS, on the other hand, has a "big job" to "...accomplish the maximum restoration of favorable physical environments for wildlife." Note the difference in emphasis on species and systems, respectively;
7. Because most land is privately held, NRCS is uniquely positioned, relative to its sister Federal agencies, to deliver profound results Nation-wide;
8. NRCS biologists and conservation planners alike must "sell" a real appreciation of wildlife and vegetation (note the Chief's corn belt example);
9. Measuring results, as opposed to conjecture.
10. Districts play a strategic role in furthering wildlife conservation.

Read the entire Hugh Hammond Bennett speech, "[Wildlife and the Soil Conservation Service Program](#)" from Feb. 9, 1938, and visit the [national NRCS website](#) to read other famous Bennett speeches.

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Overstreet, Jeremy	Resource Conservationist	Transfer to Army Corps of Engineers (Louisiana)	11/29/14	Jefferson
Moser, Robert	District Conservationist	Reassignment	12/14/14	Fort Dodge
Sandoval, Jaime	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	12/14/14	Greenfield
Fillian, Robert	Civil Engineering Tech	Retirement	12/27/14	Creston Engineering
Blomme, Sheila	Office Assistant	Promotion	12/28/14	Fairfield Area Office
Christensen, Darrell	Soil Conservation Tech	Retirement	1/1/15	Fort Dodge
Drewelow, Raymond	Soil Conservation Tech	Retirement	1/3/15	West Union
Vabora, Robert	Soil Scientist	Retirement	1/3/15	West Union Area
Applegate, Gary	District Conservationist	Promotion	1/11/15	Corydon
Beltz, Abby	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	1/11/15	Atlantic Area Office
Jensen, Sindra	Easement Programs Coord.	Promotion	1/11/15	State Office
Milroy, John	Farm Bill Specialist	New Hire	1/25/15	Sioux City Area
Voltmer, Steven	Wetland Specialist	Reassignment	1/25/15	Osceola
Izer, Ruth	Soil Conservationist	Retirement	1/30/15	Iowa City

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Richtsmeier, Charlene	Secretary	Retirement	12/8/14	Franklin SWCD
Dalbey, Claudia	Secretary	Retirement	12/26/14	Story SWCD

BILL GREINER: LONGTIME DIRECTOR OF IOWA DEPT. OF SOIL CONSERVATION DIES AT 87



The longtime director of the Iowa Dept. of Soil Conservation (1957-1980), Bill Greiner, 87, passed away Dec. 24, 2014, at Mercy Hospice in Johnston.

He led the Department during the time the state cost-share program started and the Iowa Conservancy Law was passed, recalled Iowa NRCS Asst. State Conservationist Marty Adkins.

Greiner became the first director of the Iowa Family Farm Development Authority in 1980. He retired in November 1994, but his reputation as an advocate for beginning farmers continued.

[Online Obituary](#)